

## Syllabus of Record

**Program:** CET Prague

**Course Code / Title:** (PR/CEST 354) Cultural and Political Movements in Central Europe (1848-1939)

**Total Hours:** 45

**Recommended Credits:** 3

**Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings:** Central European Studies / History, Philosophy

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Prerequisites / Requirements:** None

---

### Description

This course discusses the major movements and ideas that characterized the culture of Central Europe from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of World War II by studying them in the political context that birthed them. The course is based on the assumption that culture and ideas are born at times of crisis, are defined by a looming sense of threat, and are created by the “uneasiness in civilization” (Freud). It is this interaction between socio-political circumstances and cultural movements that is at the core of the analyses developed in class.

Particular emphasis is placed on the main cultural movements and political ideas that originated in the two German capitals, Berlin and Vienna, as the products of specific political circumstances. This course studies their interaction, from imitation to outright hostility and rejection, and the relationship between the German and non-German elements of the Habsburg empire, as manifested in Budapest and especially in Prague.

This class analyses the ways in which European literature, philosophy, music, visual arts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were in fact largely shaped in and by the specific context of Central Europe in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century and are a still-present legacy. It therefore complements the Traveling Seminar and students’ independent travel in the region.

### Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students:

- Gain familiarity with the major political and cultural movements that originated in Germanic and Danubian Europe (Mitteleuropa), with the way they materialized in art (works of fiction, philosophical texts, paintings, architecture...) and with their consequences.
- Experience the legacy of this specific culture in Prague and Central Europe.

## Syllabus of Record

### Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend all classes as well as field trips and guest lectures. Attendance requirements are outlined in the CET Attendance Policy.

The course is divided between lectures by the instructor to clarify the historical context and in-class presentations and discussions. Students are expected to have read all assigned materials prior to class, and to come prepared to actively participate.

Graded assignments include:

- Two short tests on the major concepts and ideas, consisting of 5 short-answer questions each.
- A short presentation on one of the readings. The presentation should include a short Powerpoint (5-10 slides) which will outline the main biographical elements relative to the author, a presentation of the work, and a precise analysis of the text (structure, main ideas and, eventually, consequences).
- Midterm and Final exams, including essay questions related to the readings and the material discussed in class.
- A research paper. Students choose a research topic according to their interests, in consultation with the instructor. The research paper assignment is divided into three specific assignments:
  - Topic and bibliography: this assignment should include a proposed title, a paragraph describing the content of the paper and a bibliography presented in the Chicago format. It should include a minimum of 7 references for a total length of about 200 pages of reading. The bibliography may be revised after the students have received feedback on this assignment.
  - Outline: this assignment should include the definitive title of the paper, a written introduction, a presentation of the structure of the paper divided in paragraphs and sub-paragraphs. It must outline the progression of the argument and mention the sources used for each paragraph. A revised bibliography can be included, but this is optional.
  - Final paper

### Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Two short tests on the major concepts and ideas	10 % (5% each)
Preparation and participation in class	10%
Presentation on a reading and its author	10%
Mid-term exam	15%
Final exam	15%
Research paper	40%
(divided as follows: Topic and bibliography 5%, outline 10% final paper 25%)	

### Readings

## Syllabus of Record

Anderson, Benedict: "Introduction", in: *Imagined Communities*. London and New York, Verso: 1991, 1-7.

Arendt, Hannah: "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government", in: *Totalitarianism* (part 3 of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*). San Diego & London: Harcourt Brace, 1979, 158-177.

Canetti, Elias: "The Crowd in History", in: *Crowds and Power*. New York: Farrar Straus, 1984, 167-190.

Celan, Paul: "Death Fugue", in: Sundquist, Eric J. (ed.) *Writing in Witness: A Holocaust Reader*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2018, 242-244.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb: *Addresses to the German Nation* (Eight Address: "What is a People?") [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Addresses\\_to\\_the\\_German\\_Nation](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Addresses_to_the_German_Nation)

Gellner, Ernest: "Definitions", in: *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, 1-7.

Frederick II: *Political Testament* [https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=3771](https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=3771)

Frenssen, Gustav: "Brothers or Slaves?" and "The Limit of Endurance", in: *Peter Moor's Journey to Southwest Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908, 66-80 and 198-235.

Freud, Sigmund: "The Method of Interpreting Dreams", "The Dream is a Wish-Fulfilment", "Dream-Distorsion", in: *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 78-125.

Goebbels, Joseph: "The Storm is Coming" (9 July 1932), in: *Landmark Speeches of National Socialism*, edited by Randall L. Bytwerk. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008, 32-39.

Herder, Johann Gottfried: "On Slav Nations" in: Bažant, Bažantová, Starn (eds.), *The Czech Reader*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010, 123-125.

Joseph II: "Edict of Tolerance", in: Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.): *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 36-40.

Haffner, Sebastian: *Defying Hitler* (chapters 4-13). London: Phoenix, 2003, 15-70.

Hašek, Jaroslav: "The Good Soldier Švejk Intervenes in the Great War" and "The Good Soldier Švejk at Police Headquarters", in: *The Good Soldier Švejk*. London: Penguin, 2000, 1-23.

Herzl, Theodor: "A Solution to the Jewish Question", in: Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, *The Jews in the Modern World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 533-538.

Hirschfeld, Magnus: "What People Should Know About the Third Sex", in: *Berlin's Third Sex*. Berlin: Rixdorf, 2017, 101-126.

Hitler, Adolf: "Nation and Race" (from *Mein Kampf*), in: Ball, Terence, et al. *Ideals and Ideologies : A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2019, 353-368.

Horvath, Ödön von: *Youth Without God* (Chapters 1-5). New York: Melville House, 2012, 13-30.

Isherwood, Christopher: "A Berlin Diary (Winter 1923-3)", in: *The Berlin Stories. Goodbye to Berlin*. London: Vintage, 1998, 226-252.

## Syllabus of Record

Jaszi, Oskar: "Dismembered Hungary and Peace in Central Europe", in: *Foreign Affairs*, (December 1923), 270-281.

Kafka, Franz: "A Report to an Academy", in: Bažant, Bažantová, Stern (eds.): *The Czech Reader*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010, 223-230.

Kant, Immanuel: "What is Enlightenment?"  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/kant-what-is.asp>

Kisch, Egon Erwin: „Germans and Czechs“, in: *Sensation Fair*. New York: Modern Age Books, 1941, 73-82.

Kundera, Milan: "The Tragedy of Central Europe." *New York Review of Books*, 26 April 1984, 33 – 38.

Lessing, Theodor: "Jewish Self-Hatred" (from: *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 1930), in: Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (ed.): *The Jews in the Modern World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 272.

Loos, Adolf: "Ornament and Crime", in: *Programs and Manifestos on 20th-century architecture*, edited by Ulrich Conrad. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971, 19-24.

Mach, Ernst: "Introduction", in: *The Science of Mechanics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 1-7.

Mann, Thomas: *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* (excerpts)  
[http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=946](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=946)

Margolius Kovaly, Heda: *Under a Cruel Star*. Cambridge: Plunkett Lake, 1986, 5-51.

Masaryk, Tomáš Guarrigue: "The Case for the Successor States" (from: *The Making of a State*), in: I.J. Lederer (ed.), *The Versailles Settlement. Was It Foredoomed to Failure?* London: Heath, 1960, 99-105.

Masaryk, Tomáš Guarrigue and Karel Čapek: "The Child and His World" and "The Nineties", in: *Talks with Masaryk*. North Haven: Catbird Press, 1995, 47-53 and 160-168.

Mendelssohn, Moses: "The Right to be Different", in: Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.): *The Jews in the Modern World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 68-69.

Nietzsche, Friedrich: "What the Germans Are Missing", in: *Twilight of the Idols*. Cambridge: Hackett, 1997, 43-49.

Novalis: *Hymns to the Night* <https://logopoeia.com/novalis/hymns.html#two>

Palacký, František: "Letter to the Frankfurt Parliament", in: Hans Kohn, *Pan-Slavism. Its History and Ideology*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953, 65-69.

Petőfi, Sándor: "National Song" and "Twelve Points"

## Syllabus of Record

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemzeti\\_dal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemzeti_dal)

Roth, Joseph: "Chapter 1", in: *Radetzky March*. London: Penguin, 2000, 1-18.

Sombart, Werner: "Merchants and Heroes"  
[http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=1742](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=1742)

Teige, Karel: "Constructivism and the Liquidation of Art", in: *Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia and Other Essays*. Santa Monica: Getty Foundation, 2000, 331-340.

Trotha, Lothar von: "Vernichtungsbefehl" (Extermination order)  
<https://historyhub.abc-clio.com/Support/Display/2144717>

Wagner, Richard: „The Jewish Danger“ and „German Art“ in: Hans Kohn, *Nationalism. Its Meaning and History*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1955, 164-169.

Weil, Jiří: *Life with a Star*, in: Bažant, Bažantová, Starn (eds.): *The Czech Reader*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010, 312-320.

Weininger, Otto: "The Jews Must Free Himself from Jewishness" (from: *Sex and Character*, 1903), in: Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.): *The Jews in the Modern World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 269.

Werfel, Franz: "Glosse zu einer Wedekind-Feier [Commentary on a Wedekind celebration]", in: *Prager Tagblatt*, 18 April 1914.

Werfel, Franz: "Strangers Are We All Upon the Earth", in: *Poems*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945, 42-43.

William II: "Hunenrede" (Hun-Speech)  
[http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=755](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=755)

Zweig, Stefan: "The World of Security" and "Eros Matutinus", in: *The World of Yesterday*. London: Pushkin, 2010, 23-49 and 89-113.

## Outline of Course Content

### Topic 1 - Introduction and Definitions

- What is a crisis? The relation between crisis and creation
- Heraclitus: "Fragment 53"
- What is "Mitteleuropa"? The influence of German politics and culture on Central Europe

## Syllabus of Record

### Topic 2 - The Enlightenment and Its Consequences

- The German Aufklärung
- Enlightened absolutism
- German romanticism and the rejection of reason: the notion of Volk
- German nationalism

### Topic 3 - “Gott erhalte?”: Nationalism in Central Europe

- The influence of the philosophy of the Volksgeist: What is a Volk? What is a nation?
- Nationalist movements in Central Europe and the reaction of the Habsburg empire
- Are Hungarian and Czech nationalism anti-German?
- The revolution of 1848 and its consequences
- Slav vs. Germans

### Topic 4 - Vienna Fin-de-siècle

- Politics in Vienna and the culture of hypocrisy: the official and the hidden
- Birth of psychoanalysis
- Official and secession art

### Topic 5 - Nationalism and Politics in the German World: The Coming of WWI

- The unification of Germany under Bismarck: a nationalist achievement?
- The creation of a new society based on military values (the Wilhelmine society and its impact on Austria-Hungary)
- Balance power vs. Weltpolitik

### Topic 6 - The White Man’s Burden?

- Threat to the “superiority of the White Man”
- Colonialism and the Congress of Berlin, echoes of the Congo
- Preserving the race and the Volksgemeinschaft: Eugenics and antisemitism
- Austrian antisemitism and the adoption of a German identity (“Away-from-Rome” movement)

### Topic 7 - Jewish Reaction to Antisemitism: Assimilation, Jewish Self-hatred or Nationalism?

- Assimilation at the turn of the century
- Jewish population and literature in Prague
- The birth of Jewish nationalism
- The phenomenon of Jewish self-hatred

### Topic 8 - *Finis Austriae*

- World War I and the end of the Habsburg empire
- The post-WWI European order: Prague and Budapest as capitals
- Austria, “the state that nobody wanted”

### Topic 9 - Weimar Germany

- Complicated birth of the Republic
- Constitutional and political issues

## Syllabus of Record

- Early crises and anti-republicanism
- War and the broken bodies
- Man vs. the metropolis
- Expressionism in literature and art
- Berlin: Art, addictions and sexuality

### Topic 10 - The Rise of Fascism: Central Europe in the 1930s

- Ideology of fascism
- The end of Weimar
- Austro-fascism and Hungary in the 1930s
- Was there a Czechoslovak exception?
- The role of propaganda

### Topic 11 - The Totalitarian State

- The creation of a totalitarian state
- The ideology of living space and National Socialist Foreign Policy until 1939

### Topic 12 - World War II and Its Consequences

- A brief overview of World War II
- The Holocaust: a consequence of the culture of crisis?
- Bearing Witness

### Topic 13 - A Summary: Politics, Ideas, and Culture in Prague

- Field trip: How did the ideas studied in class materialize in the Prague urban landscape?